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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, PRM, EUR/SE AND EUR/PGI;
STATE PLEASE PASS TO USAID

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TAGS: [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [CY](#)

SUBJECT: REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS -- NINTH ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN
PERSONS (TIP) REPORT SUBMISSION

REF: SECSTATE 132759

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11. (U) Paras 3-6 are sensitive but unclassified -- not for internet distribution.

12. (U) Embassy Nicosia hereby submits information for the April 2008 - February 2009 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. Embassy point of contact is John Rhatigan, Political Section, Tel: (357) 22-39-3364, Fax: (357) 22-39- 3467. Approximately 40 hours (FSO-04) and 80 hours (FSN-10) were spent in preparing this material.

13. (SBU) Answers in this para are keyed to the questions in ref tel, para 23, "The Country's TIP Situation."

1A. Sources of information include government agencies, local and international NGOs, and the media. The Embassy has a long-standing relationship with these sources and considers them reliable.

1B. Cyprus is largely a destination country for trafficked women working in the commercial sex industry. In the period under review, there was only one reported case of men being trafficked for labor exploitation. Internal trafficking does not occur but there have been reported instances of victims being trafficked through the area administered by the Turkish Cypriots to the government-controlled area. Since the last TIP report there has been a notable increase in the percentage of victims coming from Latin America.

1C. Most victims arrived in Cyprus on "artiste" visa entry permits to work in the cabaret industry, with a lesser amount arriving on barmaid visas to work in pubs or on tourist visas

to work in massage parlors disguised as private apartments. During the period April 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009, the government issued 1,906 "artiste" visa entry permits; however, the actual number of women working in cabarets was much lower, as women traveling and then returning to Cyprus were required to obtain a new "artiste" visa for each entry. There are no available estimates on the number of women working in massage parlors. For the period under review, 526 work permits were issued to women for work as barmaids. On November 1, 2008, the Council of Ministers took a decision to abolish the "artiste" category work permit. This decision came into effect as of February 1, 2009. Individuals from countries which require a visa to enter Cyprus who wish to work in Cyprus as "artistes" now need to apply for work permits as either creative artists (writers, composers, etc.) or performing artists (dancers, singers, actors, etc.) and provide evidence of their qualifications, experience and international renown.

1D. Foreign women are especially vulnerable to being trafficked to Cyprus for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In the reporting period, women from Latin America and Eastern Europe were particularly vulnerable. Of the 41 identified trafficking victims, 12 came from the Dominican Republic, 10 from Romania, nine from Moldova, three from the Phillipines, two each from Uzbekistan, Syria and Russia, and one from Ukraine.

1E. Traffickers fraudulently recruited victims in their home countries using the "artiste" work permit for work in cabarets. There were also cases of women arriving on tourist and student visas and then working out of private apartments offering sex services. Traffickers in source countries often cooperated with artiste agents/"impresarios" in Cyprus. Many

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women came to work as performers in cabarets but were pressured by the "impresarios" and the cabaret owners to provide sexual services to cabaret customers. Artiste agents/"impresarios" operate employment agencies specializing in employment of cabaret workers. Traffickers use debt bondage, i.e., they pressure the victims into prostitution to pay off their debts incurred from air tickets, "impresario" fees and medical tests. Traffickers often confiscate victims' passports.

14. (SBU) Answers in this para are keyed to the questions in reftel, para 24, "Setting the Scene for The Government's anti-TIP Efforts."

1A. The government does acknowledge that trafficking is a problem in Cyprus and continued to demonstrate at the highest levels the political will to address trafficking.

1B. The Ministries of Interior, Labor and Social Insurance, Justice and Public Order, Health, Education, and the Attorney General's Office share responsibility for combating trafficking, with the Ministry of Interior as the lead entity.

1C. The government does not lack the resources to combat trafficking and aid victims. In the period under review, resources for the Police were increased; in November, a fourth member was added to the anti-TIP unit, and in April, the Chief of Police appointed 20 officers to partner with the anti-TIP unit. These 20 officers are not exclusively dedicated to TIP and are replaced often, however, which does not always allow them to gain sufficient experience in TIP-related police work. TIP-associated corruption is not considered a problem. Although prosecutions of government employees have occurred in the past, during the current reporting period no police officer nor any other government employee was prosecuted for involvement in trafficking-related corruption cases.

1D. Per the new anti-TIP law, government anti-trafficking

efforts are coordinated by the Minister of Interior, who serves as the national coordinator for action against trafficking and chairs the Multi-disciplinary Coordinating Group (MCG), a body comprised of all government agencies involved in anti-trafficking efforts and two NGOs. The MCG meets quarterly and is mandated by law to prepare an annual report evaluating government efforts (including the implementation of the anti-TIP law) to combat trafficking. According to the law, the report must be submitted to the Council of Ministers. This report should also be submitted to the House of Representatives for information purposes, after it is approved by the Council of Ministers. The first report is expected to be prepared this summer after the MCG completes its first full year of operation. The government reports its anti-trafficking efforts to the UN, EU, OSCE, and, when requested, to international NGOs and to the local and international media. The MCG has set up four working groups, each tasked with meeting separately to deal with specific responsibilities, i.e., public awareness; protection of victims; suppression of trafficking; and revision of the policy for the entry of third-country nationals under the "artiste" work permit.

¶5. (SBU) Answers in this para are keyed to the questions in reftel, para 25, "Investigation and Prosecution of Traffickers."

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¶A. No new trafficking legislation has been enacted since the last TIP report; however, the existing law already specifically prohibits trafficking in persons for both sexual exploitation and labor, under Law 87(I)/2007, entitled "Combating Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and Protecting Victims Rights," which was enacted on July 13, 2007. This law replaced the existing (3(I)2000) law on "Combating Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Adults and Minors." The stated purpose of the new law is "to criminalize trafficking in persons, the exploitation of persons and child pornography, to take measures for the protection and support of victims from the aforementioned crimes, and to create the mechanism to monitor the implementation of these measures." It covers both internal and external forms of trafficking. Other laws used to prosecute TIP cases include:

- ¶1. The Protection of Witnesses Law of 2001, Law 95(I)/2001;
- ¶2. The Law Ratifying the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Supplementary Protocols, Law 113(I)/2003;
- ¶3. The Prevention and Suppression of Money Laundering Activities Law, Law 61(I)/1996;
- ¶4. The Aliens and Immigration Law, Cap. 105 (as amended) and Regulations;
- ¶5. The Criminal Code, Cap. 154;
- ¶6. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, Law 119(I)/2000 (as amended); and
- ¶7. The Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes Law, Law 51(I)/97.

¶B. Trafficking of adults is punishable by up to 15 years in prison and trafficking of children is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Sexual exploitation of adults is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and of minors by up to 20 years. In the period under review, there was one conviction resulting in a two-year prison sentence.

¶C. As stated in the previous paragraph, trafficking of adults is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment and trafficking of children is punishable by up to 20 years. Withholding a victim's passport or travel documents, including his alien card and/or residency permit, is a crime punishable by up to five years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 10,000 Euros (USD 12,967). Switching contracts without the worker's consent is illegal. During the period under review, the police investigated four cases of labor trafficking, three of which involved a combination of both labor trafficking and trafficking for sexual exploitation. Of those four cases,

three are pending trial and one is still under investigation.

During the period under review, there were no convictions for labor trafficking.

¶D. The law criminalizes rape, with a maximum sentence of life in prison. Most convicted rapists received considerably less than the maximum sentence; however, sentences for rape are generally higher than sentences for commercial sexual exploitation.

¶E. In the period April 1, 2008 to January 25, 2009 the government opened 29 cases of trafficking for investigation, none of which involved minors. Seven of those cases are still under investigation and 21 were sent to court. Of those 21 cases, 19 are still pending trial, two were completed and the defendants were acquitted, and one was otherwise disposed of. Of the 29 cases opened for investigation during the reporting period, 25 involved trafficking for sexual exploitation, three involved

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trafficking for both labor and sexual exploitation, and one case involved only labor exploitation. Of the 31 cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation pending at the end of the previous reporting period, 11 are still pending trial, 10 resulted in acquittals, five were dismissed by the courts, one prosecution was suspended and three are still under investigation. Only one case resulted in a conviction, which resulted in a two-year prison sentence; though the case was prepared for trial under the anti-TIP law, the offender was ultimately convicted of living off the proceeds of prostitution, sexual exploitation and indecent assault. The sentence is currently being served.

¶F. Police officers receive specialized training on how to recognize, investigate, and prosecute cases of trafficking at the Cyprus Police Academy. In addition to this specialized training, police officers took a two-day course in October on identifying TIP victims, implementing the 2007 anti-trafficking law, and distinguishing between cases of trafficking and illegal migration. The head of the police anti-trafficking unit gives lectures on a regular basis at the Police Academy which are attended by a large number of police officers. Members of the Police anti-trafficking unit and other police officers attended training courses offered by outside organizations and foreign governments. Officers of the anti-trafficking unit participated in two European Police College (CEPOL) courses in May in Lithuania and the Czech Republic, and a CEPOL course in Sweden in January 2009.

In September 2008, 43 police officers attended a two-day seminar organized by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Nicosia.

¶G. The GOC cooperates with other governments in the investigation of and prosecution of trafficking cases, and during the period under review, the police cooperated with Romanian authorities in one case of trafficking. Two Cypriots were arrested and two European arrest warrants have been issued against Romanian citizens. The case is pending for trial before the Criminal Court.

¶H. The ROC Constitution was recently amended to allow the extradition of Cypriot citizens; however, there were no such cases during the reporting period.

¶I. There is no evidence of government involvement in, or tolerance of, trafficking on a local or institutional level.

¶J. No government officials were investigated for involvement in trafficking or trafficking-related corruption during the reporting period.

¶K. Prostitution is not illegal but many acts related to prostitution, e.g., living off the proceeds of prostitution, promoting a woman for prostitution, maintaining, managing or participating in the operation of a brothel, forced detention

of a woman in a brothel, and assistance to a woman in performing prostitution are criminalized. These laws are enforced. The legal minimum age for prostitution is 18 years of age.

¶L. N/A

¶M. N/A

¶6. (SBU) Answers in this para are keyed to the questions in ref tel para 26, "Protection and Assistance to the Victims."

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¶A. Existing legislation allows identified victims a minimum of one month as a reflection period to recover from their experience and to decide whether or not they wish to cooperate with the police and testify in a trial. Victims are placed under the care of Social Welfare Services, which acts as the guardian of victims of trafficking, and have the right to work. These protections are provided in practice. Witness protection is also provided, if requested; however, no requests were made for witness protection during the period under review.

¶B. The government operates a shelter for trafficking victims, which is run by Social Welfare Services. The shelter housed a total of 28 victims between April 1, 2008 and mid-January ¶2009. The law does not differentiate between foreign and domestic victims of trafficking. Alternatively, victims could also stay in private apartments, with friends, or at the shelter run by NGO STIGMA, and are entitled to a rent subsidy and a monthly allowance provided by Social Welfare Services. From April 1, 2008 to January 15, 2009, Social Welfare Services provided shelter and assistance to a total of 59 victims, two of whom were men. Out of these 59, six were victims of labor trafficking. There are no specialized facilities for male victims of trafficking and the government shelter only accommodates women, but male victims are entitled to the same rights and protections as all victims, and housing benefits are provided. During the reporting period, the government spent 102,000 Euros (USD 132,000) on financial assistance to victims and 192,000 Euros (USD 249,000) for the running of the government shelter. Salaries of welfare officers are an additional cost.

¶C. The government provides victims with free medical, legal and psychological care, assistance to find employment, and access to programs provided by the government and/or NGOs to acquire or improve professional skills and prepare for repatriation. In the period under review, the government provided 17,000 Euros (USD 21,873) to fund the shelter run by NGO STIGMA. The government could not provide an estimate of the overall amount spent on assistance to TIP victims. Funding comes from the government budget.

¶D. Victims who decide to cooperate with the police have their temporary residence permits renewed until the police investigation and trial are completed.

¶E. Victims are entitled to stay in the government-run shelter for up to four weeks, however, several victims have been allowed to stay longer. All victims are also entitled to long-term housing benefits for as long as such benefits are required, as well as assistance in locating said long-term housing. The government provides victims with assistance to find employment, and access to programs provided by the government and NGOs to acquire or improve professional skills as well as to prepare for repatriation.

¶F. The police have a referral procedure in place to transfer victims of trafficking to Social Welfare Services. If the police encounter a trafficking victim, they immediately contact the welfare officer on duty and arrange to place the victim under the custody of Social Welfare Services.

¶G. Between April 1, 2008 and January 25, 2009, the police identified 41 victims of trafficking and referred them all to Social Welfare Services for assistance. Of these 41, 28 victims stayed at the government-run shelter. The remaining victims stayed at the shelter run by NGO STIGMA or in private

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apartments, and received financial assistance from Social Welfare Services.

¶H. The police conducted unannounced raids and undercover operations in cabarets, pubs and private apartments suspected of being used for prostitution. They also investigated complaints submitted directly by trafficking victims, whether to the police, other government agencies, or NGOs. A large number of police officers have been trained on victim identification techniques and on questioning and treatment of potential victims.

¶I. The rights of victims are generally respected. Trafficking victims are not detained, jailed or fined regardless of whether they choose to cooperate with the police.

¶J. The government encourages victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. In the period April 1, 2008 to January 25, 2009, the government identified 41 victims, 37 of whom agreed to assist in the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. Of those 37, 32 are still in Cyprus awaiting completion of the trial and five have been repatriated. Some of the victims complained about the length of the trial process, which usually lasts over a year. The remaining four victims who did not wish to assist the police asked to return to their home countries. Victims may bring civil suits against their traffickers and seek damages. They also have the right to seek compensation from the GOC pursuant to the provisions of the EU Convention for the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes. Victims who are witnesses in court cases are allowed to seek alternate employment and are allowed to leave the country temporarily. No one impedes victim access to legal redress.

¶K. Police and Social Welfare personnel receive specialized training in identifying victims of trafficking and in the provision of assistance to victims. Police officers received the training noted in para 5F above. In addition, in May 2008, 26 Social Welfare Services officers attended two one-day seminars to review procedures for victim identification and provision of assistance. In December 2008, 17 Social Welfare Services officers attended a seminar offered by the NGO Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies (MIGS) on how to interview victims of trafficking. Additionally, during the period under review, Cypriot consular or administrative staff in source country Cypriot consulates briefed recipients of artiste visas and provided them with a brochure containing employment information, rights and obligations, and emergency services contact information.

¶L. N/A

¶M. The NGO STIGMA offers services to victims of trafficking and has received funding from the government. STIGMA cooperates with NGO STOP International. STIGMA received USD 22,000 from the government during the reporting period. STIGMA actively locates victims and offers shelter, counseling, psychological and financial support, helps victims to find alternate employment, and prepares them for repatriation in cooperation with NGOs in their home countries. The shelter run by STIGMA closed at the end of 2008. STIGMA's director contends that the shelter closed because of lack of funding; however, STIGMA did not apply for government funding in 2008. The NGO still helps victims find

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¶7. (U) Answers in this para are keyed to the request in ref tel, para 27, "Prevention."

¶A. The government launched in December 2008 the second phase of a public awareness/demand-reduction campaign which includes pamphlets, posters, newspaper inserts, billboards and TV spots. It is budgeted for 50,000 Euros (USD 64,800). Pamphlets and posters have been distributed to government offices, colleges, airports and supermarkets, and billboards have been placed on main streets and highways. Newspaper inserts were placed in the two largest circulation newspapers, Phileleftheros and Politis, which have a combined readership of over 50,000. The TV spots will be aired in March 2009. This campaign is designed both to inform the public and reduce demand. The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Attorney General's Office and the OSCE, organized a conference on September 18-19 2008 on trafficking and money laundering. The Ministry of Interior also provided financial support to NGOs totaling 19,165 Euros (USD24,600) to organize conferences and other programs on trafficking in persons. An additional 75,000 Euros (97,200 USD) has been allocated in the 2009 budget for an anti-trafficking public awareness/demand-reduction campaign that will begin after the ongoing campaign finishes.

¶B. Immigration police monitor immigration and emigration patterns for evidence of trafficking.

¶C. Per the 2007 anti-TIP law, government anti-trafficking efforts are coordinated and evaluated by the Ministry of Interior, which chairs the Multi-disciplinary Coordinating Group (MCG). The MCG is comprised of all government agencies involved in anti-trafficking efforts, as well as two NGOs. The MCG coordinates communication between all entities, internal and international, on matters related to trafficking.

¶D. The government adopted a national plan of action in May 2005. It was drafted by a group of experts at the Attorney General's office with input from the Ministries of Interior, Labor and Social Insurance, Justice and Public Order, Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the Ombudsman and NGOs. The action plan has been distributed to all government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations, and is available in electronic form, in both Greek and English, from the Ministry of Interior. The national plan of action is implemented on an ongoing basis, and the MCG is required by law to revise the plan continually in order to meet current needs.

¶E. The government launched in December 2008 the second phase of a public awareness/demand-reduction campaign, as noted in para 7A above. Other than this campaign, no other measures have been taken to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts.

¶F. Law 87(I)2007 criminalizes sexual exploitation of children, to include paying children for sexual intercourse or other sexual activities. It covers the commission of the crime by Cypriots in foreign countries and is punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment. There were no such cases during the reporting period.

¶G. N/A

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¶8. Answers in this para are keyed to the request in reftel, para 28, "Heroes."

¶A. Androula Christofidou is a representative of STOP International in Geneva but spends several months every year in Cyprus. She is tireless in her efforts to assist victims of trafficking and to lobby government officials, including Cabinet Ministers and the Chief of the Police, for more

action against trafficking and for victim protection. She has created her own network of individuals in various fields, such as the media, NGOs, the diplomatic corps, and social circles, who assist her in her various activities, whether putting pressure on the government to raise money for TIP victims in need, or rescuing victims from the hands of their traffickers. She has taken victims into her house, given them money from her own pocket, and helped them find work. She has convinced her friends to do the same. She organized a conference in November which attracted participation from several international organizations, high-level government officials such as the Minister of Interior, the Attorney General, and the head of the Cyprus Police anti-TIP unit, as well as the U.S. Embassy. This conference garnered significant press coverage in Cyprus and abroad.

Urbancic